

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of study

Written and spoken language is “an important communication tool to unite the whole world for communication. Language can indicate the place where the human life and power come from; when we know a language we can speak and be able to be understood by others who know the language” (Victoria, Robert and Nina, 2013: 1). It is the heart of communication for human life in the world which we can find more information through language. So, language is required for human life and people could use language to understand about what we explained.

English is the world’s most important language.

“It is one of the foreign languages that must be learned as obligatory requirement to reach specific purpose. English language is international language that is very important for people who want to get more information. English language is the major language which is used by people in some sectors. It is used for obtaining successful jobs, promotions, academic function and business interactions” (Wierzbicka, 2006: 3).

So, English language is a convenient language for communication because almost all countries use it in education. People all the world have been using English language in formal or informal situation in some countries in the world such as America, England, Canada, India, Australia, etc. The countries which use English language such as foreign language are Indonesia, Thailand, Laos, Philippine, Myanmar else. Thus, English

language is very essential for everyone and now, there are many ways to learn about English language easily.

Thailand has always been a country with one official language; Thai having only one language is the concept of Thai national stability. However, there have been proposals to make Thailand a country with two languages, Thai and English, throughout the country but this has never emerged due to the reasons mentioned above. Nevertheless, English is “the first foreign language that students must study in Thai schools. Hence, the level of English proficiency of Thai students is low in comparison with many countries in Asia (e.g. Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore). According to the speech given by the Minister of the Ministry of University Affairs on March 6th, 2000, the average TOEFL scores of Thais are the same as for Mongolians but higher than for North Koreans and Japanese” (Wiriyaichitra, 2002).

According to Baker (2012) Thailand as “a country that has never been colonized by any foreign countries, has both advantages and weaknesses in term of international language. One of the shortages is insufficient skills and knowledge in learning other languages such as English as the international lingua franca (Baker, 2012)”. Now Thailand is focusing on improving their English language because English language is number one all of language in ASEAN. So, they want to develop in integrating students’ English education skill because English education in Thailand is still low ostensibly. So, Thailand still has been a minor is English language compared to other countries. Thailand entered ASEAN English community and since then English language has been the tool of communication for everyday life.

It is inevitable of Thai education to urge students to have communication skill in English about writing, speaking, reading and listening.

Thailand is now entering the ASEAN English Community, therefore English is practically a medium tool for everyday communication and for careers. As a consequence, English is the key for all the member countries developing their human resources so as to compete in the local, national, or international job market in Asia. It is inevitable for Thai universities to urge students to have communication skills in English: Writing, Speaking, Reading, and Listening. Writing is a skill used in everyday life Such as, filling forms, taking messages, writing emails, or conducting business correspondence. Moreover, such skill is vital when some of the students participate in international environments such as studying overseas to have further education. Writing is “seen as the most challenging skill for a significant number of Thai students” (Sangiamchit, 2017).

Many of Thai students came to Indonesia without strong English knowledge because almost all of them cannot communicate in English. However, some of them entered English department in Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta and then all of them had a difficulty to adjust for new environment and faced cultural aspects of Java in Indonesia. The environment of education in Indonesia where teaching style and learning context are different from former experience is the problems which led to high disappointment, confusing and stress for Thai students in Indonesia. However, Thai students are trying of study hard and improving their Indonesian language and English language at the same time. “Communication barriers in the form of language and social norms can

hamper international student's ability to acculturate and pose a great barrier to academic success, which was usually one of the key objectives of the international students" (Kim, 1995, in Ward et al., 2001).

Alexander (1975) stated that all of four basic language skills are Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. In his book he also said that the most important of all basic language skills are speaking and writing. "Speaking and writing are the most important of these skills, since to some extent they presuppose the other two". In this section, the writer focused on writing skill. Writing was one of the language skills that should be taught besides the other skills. Writing is regarded as a productive skill. It aimed at assisting students in expressing their idea written.

In fact, the majority of students usually refused to write. It is caused by the condition that they did not know what to write. The writing skill is considered to be the most difficult of the language skills for Thai students. Based on the interview, the students are able to understand what they heard but they did not know how to write it. They might be familiar with English listening and speaking language such as from the English songs or watching the Hollywood movies. Then, some general signs are easy to find in public area which is related with the use of their reading comprehension of language context, for example 'push and pull' at the door of one store, 'no smoking', 'parking area', etc. In contrast, the writing skill could be both new and difficult things used in daily life. Not all of students write in English to send a text. In spite of the fact that writing is very important, especially for Thai students who should master four language skills that have to be

mastered since junior high schools, the writing skill is considered as a difficult assignment.

There are still many reasons why writing English is so difficult. Elbow (1998) said that “there are many people who cannot write. They feel confused when they have to write because they do not even know how to get started to write”. Rigg (2011) also stated that “getting started to write could be very difficult”. Similar with Rigg’s statement, Doucette (2009) also found that “getting started is the hardest part of writing. Students need effort to achieve writing ability”. According to Merriam Webster, “effort is the total work done to achieve a particular end”. So, effort in achieving writing ability is the total work to improve the skills of writing.

In this study, six Thai students studying English language at the Department of English Education of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta were selected. Robertson et al. (in Sawir, 2005: 569) concluded that “language issues were the major area of unsolved problems faced by international students”. Because of the teaching learning at department of English education in UMS the lecturer used two languages, namely: Indonesian language and English language, therefore, for The International Undergraduate Thai students, they have to learn Indonesian first, to make success in second language learning. At the same time, they took English Department in UMS so that they have to learn English as well. It means that they have to learn both Indonesian language and English language. They should make balance to learn both of the language. For The International Undergraduate Thai students, the first time they join class they feel worried

and feel unconvinced about themselves because of the situation in the class they never faced before.

According to Khamkhien (2006), English language is “taught as the first foreign language since the government had recognized that it is the global language”. Even though trends globally in teaching English had been focusing on the communicative approach, unfortunately English teaching in Thai schools has, in most cases, continued to emphasize the Grammar-Translation method adopted since the beginning of the 19th Century. Almost all Thai schools teach reading and writing skills more than listening and speaking skills. Also, the environment inside and outside of school, including the community and homes has not promoted development of students’ communicative English skills. In addition, Thai students have little opportunity to practice English on a daily basis and most Thai students did not have a high level of English competency despite learning English for 9-12 years in basic education as well as at the university level. Thai Government had recognized the vital roles of English that play in the global society and allows the Ministry of Education to elevate the English language competency among the students as well as the teachers. The policies and strategic plans in promoting English Language learning and teaching had been announced in each government. “The Ministry of Education also viewed that the process on elevating the effectiveness of English language learning and teaching should include in 2 all developmental elements involved, that is to say-the clarity of language learning policy, the interpretation of policy into practices, the development of curriculum, the

quality of teachers, the teaching and learning process, and the plans for materials provided”. (Prasongporn, 2009: 1).

This research was conducted Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta. Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS) is one of the biggest Universities organized by Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah with approximately 29 million members and is one of the largest socio religious organizations in Indonesia. Established in 1912, so Muhammadiyah is older than the Republic of Indonesia. Muhammadiyah is known to be a modern Muslim organization that plays a significant role in Indonesia’s development through impressive records of providing education and health services in Indonesia. (<http://kui.ums.ac.id>)

In this research, the researcher focuses on various semesters of Thai students coming from the third semester, fifth semester and seventh semester undertaking writing subject about writing and the kind of writing that students studied about essay writing and all about writing skills. Essay has become a major part of a formal education. Secondary students are taught structured essay formats to improve their writing skills, and essays are often used by universities in selecting applicants. In both secondary and tertiary education, essays are used to judge the mastery and comprehension of material. Students are asked to explain, comment on, or assess a topic of study in the form of an essay. During a course, university students would often be required to complete.

This research is focused on the efforts and problems solved to convey the reasons of their difficulties in improving their academic writing in English language while they are learning English at Universitas

Muhammadiyah Surakarta. The subjects of the research are Thai English students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta. Then, the researcher conducted a research entitled **“Efforts and Problems of Thai Students’ Learning in Improving Writing skill of English Education Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta”**.

B. Problems Statements

The research formulated problems as follows.

1. What is the problems of Thai Students in improving writing skill in English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta?
2. How do Thai Students to improve their writing skills in English Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta?

C. Limitation of the Problem

In this research, the researcher makes the limitation of the study to Six Thai students of Department of English Education of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta at the third, the fifth, the seventh semester. The researcher makes the limitation of the subject and object of study. The researcher limits the problem only on the efforts, problems and solutions faced by international Thai students in effort of improving writing skill.

D. Objective of the Study

There are some objectives of this study. They are mentioned below.

1. to investigate the problems faced by Thai Students in academic writing skill in English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, and
2. to describe ways of Thai Students to improve their writing skills in English Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.

E. Benefits of the Study

The results of this action research are expected to give benefits both theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretical benefits
 - a. The results of this research can be used as a reference for further research.
 - b. The results of this research can give a description of the problems and the solution of Thai students who studied in English Education Department.
2. Practical benefits
 - a. Reader

Reader can get more information about the efforts of Thai Students to achieve academic writing skills in English Education Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.
 - b. Thai students

Students will learn English language appropriately, especially for the Thai students. They will be able to improve their English language skill to achieve the appropriate university level.

F. Research paper organization

The research comprised five chapters. A brief summary of the content of each chapter is described as follow:

Chapter I is introduction. It contains the background of the study, problem statement, limitation of the study, objectives of the study, benefits of the study and research paper organization.

Chapter II is a review of underlying theory. It contains theoretical review and the previous study.

Chapter III is research method. It contains the type of research, research setting, subject of research, data and data source of the data, techniques of analysis data and trustworthiness.

Chapter IV is research finding, discussion and limitation. In this chapter, the researcher investigates to effort of Thai students improve writing skill in English Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta from the data finding, the researcher furthermore provides the core points out of the research.

Chapter V is conclusion, implication and Suggestion of the research.